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ABSTRACT

According to the 1969 census the population of the Soviet Union is 241 million of which 105 million persons live in the countryside. In order to provide this large population living in a vast area with the opportunity of using library books, a broad and ramified network of library institutions had to be organized which would make it possible to bring the library closer to the people's homes or place of work. At present there are a little over 122,000 public libraries of which 35,000 serve the urban population and nearly 87,000 serve the rural population. There are an average of 1,900 readers per library. There are 1,193,590,000 books, magazines, brochures or an average of 5.0 books per capita in the libraries' collections. Factors which will have a decisive effect on the organizational structure of the public library network are: (1) changes in the socio-demographical structure of the urban and rural populations, (2) more free time, (3) higher level of knowledge and professional qualifications, (4) expansion principles of populated localities of various types and structures, (5) preferential industrial or agricultural development of certain territories and (6) development of interdepartmental co-operation and co-ordination of planning. The multistaged structure of the library network is a sound basis for the centralized system and allows better usage of the book collections of each library. (NH)

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Certain Problems of Organisation of Public Library Network in the Soviet Union

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Way back in the first years of Soviet Power Vladimir Lenin while mapping out and substantiating the principles of organisation of the librarianship in the socialist country paid particular attention to the necessity of the creation in the Soviet Union of a planned ramified library network.

With every year of Soviet Government came to face the necessity of planning, organizing and accommodating various librarian institutions, public libraries, first and foremost, which were catering to the requests of the widest circles of the population.

It was not accidental that the elaboration of the principles of dislocation of the librarian network on the territory of the country have always been the object of the close attention of the Soviet librarianship.

These principles are based on the necessity to give all the citizens in all corners of the Soviet Union an equal opportunity for using the library.

The complexity of the dislocation problem lies in the specific features of the Soviet Union. It occupies the territory with the total area of 22 million sq. km. and includes most varied climatic and landscape zones. Nearly one hundred different nationalities live on its territory. Variety and contrasts in the population density depend on the climatic, landscape geographical and national peculiarities. Settlements of every type may be found in our country - cities with the many-million population, large towns with 700,000 and more

population, average towns whose population ranges between 100,000 and 500,000 small towns in which about 20,000 live, worker's settlements, villages with several thousand population and farmsteds where several families live.

According to the 1969 census the population of the Soviet Union is 241 million of which 105 million live in the countryside.

In order to provide the multi-million population living on a vast territory with the opportunity of using library books a broad and ramified network of librarian institutions had to be first organized which would make it possible to bring the library close to the peoples' habitation of the place of work.

It was particularly important to open first of all libraries in rural localities, national republics, in the Far North and in some other regions where the need of culture was especially great.

In the course of socialist construction in the Soviet Union the network of the kind has been organized in the country. The state along with the trade unions and collective farms participated actively in its creation.

At present there are in the Soviet Union a little under 122,000 public libraries of which number 35,000 are serving urban and nearly 87,000 rural population. On an average there are 1,900 readers per library.

The number of books, magazines, brochures in their stocks totals 1,193,590,000 or an average of 5.0 books per capita.

Each stationary library maintains its own ramified network of book issue desks, mobile libraries which serve small populated locations and average production collectives where it is inexpedient and non-economical to organize stationary libraries. Today 229,500 such points are functioning throughout the country.

The location of the librarian network in the country is based on the territorial principle, e.g., readers are being served at their places of residence. The network is organized in strict correspondence with the existing administrative and territorial division which includes such units (from larger to smaller) as: union republic, autonomous republic, region or territory, district, village Soviet.

In practice, these units are provided with librarian service by creating:

1. National, republican, regional libraries which organize their book collections with due account of the economical, industrial and cultural make-up of the entire administrative-territorial region; book stocks are used not only for servicing these who live in the republican and regional centres but also for catering to the increased cultural requirements of the entire population of a republic, territory or a region; methodological and

bibliographical assistance to other libraries of the region;

2. Central town and district libraries which serve their own administrative-territorial units and present a sort of a link between the main regional library and smaller stationary town and rural libraries, and also carry out methodological supervision over the urban and rural libraries;

3. Urban and rural libraries servicing population in their towns and village Soviets.

Urban and rural libraries are organized on the basis of the district library dislocation. The definition "district library service" includes separate populated locality, part of it or several localities and presents a zone of activity of one stationary public library.

In distributing libraries in a district we proceed first of all from the necessity to provide an opportunity to an urban citizen to make use of the library or its branch not more than 10-15-minute walk from his home or work in the town and not more than 30-minute walk in the countryside. Each public library is allocated its service neighbourhood, the size of which depending on the number and density of population when determining the radius of its activities.

The general rules of library locationing in the Soviet Union may be characterized by the following norms worked out by the Soviet librarianship:

In countrysides --

1. At least one public library of any department on the territory of each village Soviet (population 500 and more). A village Soviet may have several libraries considering that each library has minimum 1,000 readers and are situated not less than 2 km apart.

An exception are district of the Far North, mountaneous regions and regions with difficult access, where the population norms may be diminshed;

2. When a village Soviet has several libraries, a central village library is appointed which co-ordinates the work of all libraries situated on the territory of the Soviet;

3. In the case when the children's population of the village Soviet is over 500 of boys and girls aging between 7 and 14 (pupils of 1-8 forms), a children's section is organized at the library;

4. For the library to be opened for the reader the initial book collection of the village library should have minimum 2,000 books; later on the book collection should have five books per resident of a district served by the library; the book stock of the central village library should also have at least five books per district resident plus 0.5 of a book for every resident of the village Soviet;

5. Each village library should have minimum one staff, paid worker. At present the number of paid village

librarians in a number of union republics (for instance, in the Russian Federation) is determined depending on the amount of the librarian work. If a library has 600 readers and issues 15,000 books annually, each 300 extra readers and 10,000 book issues entitles the library to an additional 0.5 librarian unit;

6. An adult and a children's library serve the grown-ups and the youths of the rural administrative centre. Depending on its size and the population residing in it, the centre may have several public libraries belonging to various departments, each for every 10,000 residents.

District libraries are the centres of the organizational and methodological assistance rendered to the rural libraries and function as inter-library exchange centres for the libraries of the entire district.

In towns --

1. A public library under any department, not counting the libraries situated on the territory of premises of an industrial establishment or an institution, is organized in every town, town administrative district, or worker's settlement. A library is organized on condition that it will serve at least 10,000 and the distance between the nearest library is minimum 1.5 km;

2. A central town library is, as a rule, organized in the towns which have several public libraries, and in the towns with administrative districts - an affiliated

libraries of these districts, which serve as the centres for rendering the organisational and methodological assistance and also carry out inter-library exchange functions for public libraries of the town or its districts;

3. The initial book collection of the town library allowing to open it should have at least 5,000; later on the collection should have four books per each resident of the district served by the library plus 0.5 of a book per every resident of the administrative region; the central town library has four books per each resident of the district served by the library plus 0.5 of a book per each town resident;

4. Every town library should have minimum 2 staff workers. The number of paid staff workers is determined in correspondence with the state approved "Standard Staffs of the Town, District and Children's Library" and depends on the size of the book collection. An individual staff schedule is set for libraries with a collection over 60,000 copies of books, magazines and brochures. At present it is essential to determine the number of paid librarians depending not on the size of the book collection but rather on the volume of work. In some of the republics this question has already been prepared to be examined by state organs;

5. Independent children's libraries are organized

in the towns with administrative division - at least one library in a district. When there are 1.500 pupils of 1-8 forms and preschool children from 6 years and upwards children's sections are organized at the libraries for grown-ups.

Besides the state public libraries a place apart in importance is held by the trade-union libraries numbering today 26,000. As to their character, content and methods of work, trade-union libraries are conventional public libraries. They are organized, in the main, at factories, plants, establishments, worker's clubs and Houses of Culture. There are also inter-union stationary libraries organized by the territorial Soviets of trade unions. Independent trade-union libraries are being set up at the establishments and institutions whose collectives number minimum 500. They are located according to production principle. As a rule, these libraries cater first of all the workers of their enterprise. Besides they issue books to the population residing nearby.

The above-mentioned principles and norms or organization of the network of public libraries account for the national and local specific features, and in a number of cases local state bodies and organs of culture adopt their own decisions in library network locationing.

The working out of the norms has been highly important since it allowed us to better organize the work of the existing library network in servicing the population.

Using these instructions concerning the locationing of the libraries and the norms, the librarians could work out on the basis of the analysis of the existing network concrete measures as to its rational distribution. In the process of improving the network some of the libraries were transfered from those areas where they were in excess to the regions where there was need for them. Redestribution between the libraries of their book collections was undertaken in order to balance the number of books per capita. As a result book service of the population has been improved. Local state organs began to differentiate when calculating allocations for acquisitioning literature for each library depending on the number of residents in the sphere of its service and an average book provision. In the majority of populated localities library services have been organized in one form or another.

One can get an idea about the total scope of the work from the following figures: in the Russian Federation alone nearly 300 town and 600 village libraries have been transfered and over 3,000 branches, issue desks, mobile libraries were organized in countryside, 20,000 library neighbourhoods were reorganized along more rational lines.

The improvement work conducted in the country included such measures as the amalgamation of small libraries, enlargement of the existing libraries, provision of new and extension of the old premises, conclusion

of treaties with various establishments, collective and state farms for additional allocations on librarian service of the population.

The above-mentioned measures helped to improve considerably the librarian service of the population and draw into public libraries a large number of new readers. Thus thanks to the improvement of the public library network in the Russian Federation alone over 9 million town residents were additionally provided with library books and the rural libraries welcomed over 1,5 million new readers.

The worked out principles and norms of the public library network made it possible to organize it so that the librarian institutions could be distributed on the territory of the country in the most rational, planned and economical way.

Today nearly 75,500,000 readers or 80 per cent of all the readers in the country frequent public libraries. They are issued annually nearly 1,500 million books or an average of 19 books per reader. In most of the regions of the country the library book has been brought within reach of each literature person.

At the same time the organizers and practical librarianship workers feel that there is a certain lagging behind the requirements of today in the district library distribution.

We think that this is due to the qualitative changes

in the socio-demographical structure of society in the last ten years. These changes may be explained first and foremost by the changes in the places of residence and in the direct role man plays in the production process, by the changes in the content and character of labour in the production sphere, by higher welfare of the population brought about by the scientific and technological progress. These changes are characterized by the higher role of mental activity, greater share of intellectual type of activity in most of the professions, increased number and higher capacity of high-qualified specialists. The requirements of science and industry in skilled workers have determined the urbanization process, rapid growth of towns with higher schools, research and cultural centres. 885 new towns with a total population of 36,000,000 appeared in the Soviet Union in the period between 1959 and 1969.

Simultaneously with the town development new types of public relations emerge in countryside where people today work in conditions of a large mechanized economy which demands a more skilled labour and theoretical training. The scientific and technical progress creates new links between agricultural production and industry and the creation on this basis of agro-industrial complexes. They give rise to new populated localities, which combine in them all the progressive sides of the

town with the advantages of the countryside. Today there are over a hundred towns of the kind in the country.

At the same time the traditional rural populated localities which have been formed and are continuing to develop can no longer be regarded as isolated because of the complex and durable economical and administrative ties existing among them.

Parallel with the above-mentioned changes a natural process is under way in the life of society - the growing need in various information, primarily in information which will help an individual in his practical activity. This process results in the growing share of the special and scientific books in the overall volume of the printed matter in the Soviet Union. Today specialized books make up nearly 87 per cent of the entire amount of literature (including social and political literature) published in the Soviet Union.

Today Soviet librarians note that one of the features and an evidence of the interests of so-called "mass reader" becoming more complex as his request for a specialized book which is growing in scope with every year and demands prompt satisfaction.

Public library can no longer restrict itself to carrying out the functions of raising general educational and cultural level of the population, e.g., to be an enlightening institution. To have a sizable book collection is no longer sufficient for a public library. It should have a well-appointed collection to satisfy most

varied requirements from professional to the aesthetical.

If we take library network as a material ground for librarianship, we shall see that we are not in a position to satisfy to the full the present-day requirements of the "mass reader" with the present organisational forms of the public library network, which had taken shape and at a certain stage played a positive role in drawing into reading every family and the literature part of the nation.

In the last decade the work of improving public library network in the country has shown convincingly that the results attained do not bring the librarianship to the level which is dictated by the growing requirements of the population for a library book.

According to the principles which have taken to this date library network is organised basing on the external indications - population, territory, distance. The activity of a library is restricted by a present area. Each library encloses itself within the set independent limits regardless of other libraries and inevitably leads to undifferentiated approach to the current book acquisitions, deprives the library of the durable contacts and weakens its opportunities for co-operation and co-ordination.

As a result libraries homogenous in book collections, structure and activity spring up in each library service neighbourhood. Even if a library has a sizable book collection, the entire network of such libraries fail to satisfy

the requirements of their readers to the full, because actually they have no books to choose from.

In organizing library service the social and professional characteristics of the population are taken into account by setting up a network of special libraries - medical, technical, agricultural, etc. However, these networks are concentrated, as a rule, in the republican, regional and territorial centers and also in large industrial towns and cannot offer equal opportunities of their systematic use to all the specialists in this or that spheres of knowledge. In addition, itegration of sciences results in the universalisation of book collections of the special libraries bringing their tasks and functions in serving science and production close to the tasks and functions of the public libraries.

Due to these reasons with a view of improving in the basic positions and methods of the structure of the existing network of libraries have to be changed somewhat.

We think that the following factors will have a decisive effect on the organisational structure of the public library network:

(a) changes in the socio-demographical structure of the town and rural population (growth of the urban and decrease in the rural population, appearance of the agro-industrial complexes, tendency towards concentration of rural population and of suburbian residents near

the means of communications, greater movement of the population);

(b) greater amount of free time;

(c) steadily growing level of knowledge and professional qualification;

(d) building-up principles of populated localities of various types and structures;

(e) preferential industrial or agricultural development of certain territories of the country (Siberia, the Far East, South-Eastern steppe areas of the Urals, Kazakhstan, the Altai Territory);

(f) the development of the tendencies of the interdepartamental co-operation and co-ordination of planning.

The problems concerning the working out of the new scientifically substantiated principles and norms of the organization of the public library network in the country is the object of research initiated in a number of republics by the Lenin State Library with the direct participation of the largest libraries in the country.

In the process of the research we aim to test a number of the hypotheses that have come to the fore.

The main position which should be checked is whether in organizing public library network it is more expedient at the present-day stage to base the librarian district activity not on the zone principle restricted to any one library but on the unit of populated locality,

a town according to the established standardization or a group of rural localities.

The most effective organization of the librarian service within such a unit will be a stepped network structure:

- main district library with a library bus,
- a library with a territorial reading-hall,
- an exchange library,
- book exchange and order desk.

Many years of experience have shown that the multi-staged structure of the library network at the present-day stage of development of the links between the libraries presents a sound basis for the creation of the centralized system of methodological and organizational supervision of the librarianship and makes for better use of the book stocks of each library and satisfy readers' requirements to the full.

But whereas formerly the stepped librarian network structure was, mainly, intended for ensuring methodological supervision and links between the central and rank-and-file libraries, the new structure should, first and foremost, make provision for the creation within the populated locality unit of an all-purpose book stock intended to satisfy diversified and broader requirements of the population and the units organized on the basis of the differentiatingly selected book collections.

We are compelled to seek new ways for determining the volume and composition of the library's book stocks, for establishing the norms of book-provision of the population within the area serviced by a library.

With this approach to the organization of the public library network inside the population unit being accepted as the basis of the library district organization all the libraries are regarded in their totality. This approach provides a certain leeway for increasing book collection on a certain subject at the expense of certain sections of the book stock depending on the place of the library in the multi-stage structure: for instance, the larger the library, the greater is the non-fiction book collection and vice versa, the smaller the library, the more books on fiction it offers.

This will require the working out of norms of the annual book acquisitions for each stage.

The problem concerning coordination between public and special libraries in the general system of the librarian system and directly in every populated locality unit also requires close study.

We suggest checking at the second stage of research the position that the structure of the general system of service in the populated locality unit should be based on the principle of the place and role of the book in the practical activity of a person-acquiring education,

perfecting knowledge, raising qualification or getting a new one, scientific activity.

It is also essential to check whether all the libraries in the general library system rightly belong to the following groups:

1. School, technical school and higher school libraries serve educational purposes;

2. Special libraries of institutions and establishments and also public libraries present opportunities for refreshing knowledge and raising qualifications and acquiring new skills;

3. General scientific libraries (republican, regional, territorial), academic libraries, large special libraries serve science.

When this differentiation is realized, a public library besides conducting the work aimed at the ideological upbringing, raising the cultural level of the population, organizing their recreation will come to occupy a place of importance in that part of the practical activity of each and every individum which lies between getting education and engaging in the practical activity. It will become an institution intended for satisfying most varied requirements of the broad range of highly-qualified workers and specialists engaged in the national economy and thus fulfil the functions dictated by the contemporary times.

We hope that the research conducted in various towns and rural areas of the country will help to find for each unit of populated localities ways of establishing interrelations, meaningful and spatial interrelation of individual links of the librarian service and make practical conclusions concerning the organization of the librarian service as a free combination of its components the general integrity of which is provided by the main role of a large library supplemented by a ramified system of local librarian institutions serving various purposes.

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